FBI Ethics Report Is Called Selective

Alice Sessions Asserts Six-Month Inquiry Missed Much of Her Life

By Sharon LaFraniere
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Justice Department ethics investigators interviewed scores of people during their six-month inquiry into alleged ethical misconduct by FBI Director William S. Sessions. But his wife, Alice Sessions, says they completely missed her life.

Nowhere does the 161-page report by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) describe how "unprofessional" FBI security personnel chiseled her woodwork and left holes in her walls back in San Antonio. That's why she felt she had to intervene in FBI security plans for their house in Washington, she said in a 3½-hour interview late Saturday in her living room.

Nowhere does the report mention the times she stood in the rain in evening clothes, trying to hail a cab, after some semiofficial event her husband was too busy to attend. Instead, the report cites her use of an FBI vehicle to go to the hairdresser—while on the way to pick up a rental car, she said.

OPR assailed her husband for not reimbursing the FBI for holiday trips to San Francisco, where their daughter lives. But Alice Sessions remembers how on the December 1988 trip, "he spent the whole time on the phone doing interviews."

Alice Sessions, 62, the wife of a public servant all her life, could talk all night about what's missing from the report: anniversaries missed; long evenings shut up in hotel rooms while her husband toils elsewhere; the time FBI agents rushed her husband to the hospital without even telling her.

What it's like to have to help yourself out of the FBI limousine while a group of agents hovers around your husband. To hear about how "Alice stories" entertain the agents.

She has a few stories of her own to tell, "things," she said, "I've been quiet about." And with a background in theater and speech, she knows how to make her stories sound effective, with dramatic pauses and her hand on her breast.

For instance, the famous meeting in the director's conference room about the fence. As Alice Sessions tells it, with tears in her eyes, her husband no sooner left the room that his deputies laid into her about embarrassing the bureau.

She said Associate Deputy Director Weldon Kennedy upbraided her for an article in a gossip column that described her support for an FBI barbershop, day care center and maybe a masseuse. "You need to be careful what you talk about when you have lunch with the ladies," she said Kennedy told her. Kennedy declined to comment last night.

She said Deputy Director Floyd I. Clarke, discussing security measures, told her " 'the FBI had to know what criminals do because we can do it ourselves.' "

"At that point I was stunned," she said, drawing herself back against the couch. "I really felt I had been threatened at that point." Clarke declined to comment.

Alice Sessions said she now sees her husband trying to put down a palace coup that has been in the works "for a long period of time." But she said "his hands are tied" because former attorney general William P. Barr ordered him not to take any action against anyone who cooperated with the OPR report.

To her, the report is wholly "manufactured" and based on a false idea of how people live. Perhaps the best example of the conflict in perspective is an incident when the FBI director and his wife gave two Soviet dancers a ride to Wolf Trap in an FBI "follow" car.

OPR said it was one of a number of instances when the FBI director allowed "unauthorized passengers" in a government vehicle.

But Alice Sessions said that rule on passengers is "not for Bill," because he must travel in government vehicles for security reasons. "If you are going to tie his hands, to say he can only do what some agent in the field can do, what's the point of having a director? . . . To say agents can't do that does not make him unethical."

In the same vein, she defends her husband's decision to ask the FBI legal attache office in Paris to help the same dancers make flight connections.

"All they [the FBI employees] had to do was make a call," she said. "They were in the office anyway." Asked if that constituted official business, she said: "There are lots of times when there are unofficial things done, but the director does [it], and it becomes official.

"The fact is you just can't write a set of rules that you just fit into," she said. "You don't stop daily and say, 'Is this official? Is this official?'

"None of them [other FBI officials] do things that way," she said. "You can't live like that."